

**Oral History Interview with
John F. Lamiman**

Cal Poly Pomona University Library

John F. Lamiman Summary

John F. Lamiman began teaching at the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo campus in the summer of 1946. Shortly after that, he was transferred to the Cal Poly Voorhis campus in San Dimas, California. The Voorhis campus was the southern satellite of the main Cal Poly campus in San Luis Obispo. Cal Poly acquired the much larger Kellogg campus in nearby Pomona in 1949 and moved all instruction to Kellogg campus as new buildings were constructed. Lamiman discusses his experience working with students in the 1940s, many of whom were veterans of World War II, the facilities at the Voorhis campus, the move to the new Kellogg campus and new Science Building, and his advice on choosing a field of study.

Subject Headings

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Veterans

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John F. Lamiman

1966

*Interview conducted by Richard M. Francisco
Transcribed by Iman A. Mirza*

JFL: In 1918, I went to the University of California, Berkeley with the idea of training for the field of Agricultural Inspection. And [I] enrolled as a student in the Department of Entomology and Parasitology. I obtained my bachelor's degree in 1922, a master's degree in 1924 in Entomology and Parasitology, my doctorate degree in 1931, in Entomology and Physiology. I was first employed by the University of California in 1922—as a research assistant—in entomology. Until 1935, I went to [University of California] Davis as an instructor in entomology and parasitology by spending four years at Davis.

JFL: I left Davis in 1939; the purpose of going back to obtain a junior college high tech general secondary credential, because I preferred teaching to research. In 1942, following the beginning of World War II, I spent three years plus in the shipyards at Richmond—after which I was a substitute teacher in the [inaudible] city school. Until June of 1946, I first went to work for Cal Poly. My work was during the summer session at San Luis Obispo. September 1 of 1946, I started my work at the Voorhis campus. On the Voorhis campus, during this first year, we had many difficulties. A large number of students—80 to 85% of them are G.I.'s—and this created a problem from the [inaudible].

JFL: Due to their military training, they had learned to do things without thinking and would accept practically anything the instructor would tell them and—well to hand it back to him verbatim. It was very difficult to get them to think for themselves; this problem existed for two or three years. All of the work at the Voorhis campus was in the area of agriculture; the other departments being support departments. Coming to Cal Poly, I came as head of the [Agricultural] Inspection Department [and] taking over the Bio[logical] Science program in 1948.

JFL: During the first year at Cal Poly, we had approximately 235 students and nine instructors. My work during that first year was all over the Biological Science program. With the acquisition of the Kellogg campus in 1949-1950, the [inaudible] activity in planning a move to the Kellogg campus. Much of the work during the 1950s and 1960s were devoted to the planning of the new Science Building on the Kellogg campus, which—for two or three years—housed the entire staff and faculty of the campus. When we moved to the Kellogg campus, there were approximately 870 students as compared with the 460-470 students on the Voorhis campus.

JFL: The staff at the Voorhis campus—of Bio Science—consisted of five members, which has increased to approximately 17 or 18 at the present time. Our Bio Science program—on moving to the Kellogg campus—consisted of the first two years of all the majors in 1956. In 1957, the third year was added. And in 1958, the fourth year [was added]. At the present time, the students in the Bio Science program number over 300. Many of our graduates from [inaudible] have gone

on to graduate work and into professional fields, and that might've made off handing records [inaudible].

RMF: Dr. Lamiman, I wonder if you could take a few minutes and describe your classes on the Voorhis campus and compare those classes with both—the type of classes you had when the Kellogg campus was first used and then the classes you're having now—at the end of this year, 1966.

JFL: In 1946 to '48, the classes on the Voorhis campus were quite large. We had very limited classroom space, and lectures, for the most part, had to be given in the Chapel. The laboratories were small, which meant repetition in some instances. On coming to the Kellogg campus, we had a greatly expanded facilities, not all of the equipment that we needed, but we did very well the first year or two. With the addition of other buildings on the Kellogg campus, the Bio Science department occupies the entire first floor of the Science Building and the program development is still continuing with the addition of the coming year of some \$70,000 worth of new equipment to equip labs—which have been used as lecture rooms up to the present time.

RMF: Dr. Lamiman, I noted [by] talking to other personnel during this interview period that the first year on the Kellogg campus, all classroom were housed in the north wing of this new Science Building. I wondered if you feel the stress and the strain of the additional majors in this Science Building at that time. Was there enough classroom space available for your classes?

JFL: We could have used more space. We got along; the main difficulties in the south wing were that all the electrical work had not been done, and unfortunately, we were not able to use all of our facilities at that time. Even though we moved in under [inaudible] conditions, I feel that the move was a good one at that time because of the number of students desiring to come to Cal Poly.

RMF: Dr. Lamiman, we note that this is your retirement year at Cal Poly. I wonder if it's appropriate now that you might come in on what you feel that the future of this particular department is at Cal Poly. If you could give us a few of your thoughts on future curriculum that might be included in the Bio Science department at Cal Poly. If you could do that now, sir.

JFL: I could say nothing but the progress for the Bio Science department in the future; I look [forward] for more and more students to enter the graduate field in other institutions, and in not too many years, a master's program was at the department with emphasis on many of the specialized fields of the department. Personally, I feel that the department should remain [inaudible] Biological Science, rather than being stored up into several fields of interest.

JFL: One of the areas in which I feel the department can make great advances is in the development of a program in the professional areas, training people for such jobs as technicians in various types—of various types.

JFL: To make possible, this future development of the department, it will be necessary to build an addition to the Science Building; to house a lot more adequate laboratories and to take care of the increasing number of students. This should include a well-developed museum with all of the

facilities necessary to operate the same. Also, adequate facilities should be provided for student projects in conjunction with this museum.

RMF: Dr. Lamiman, I wonder if this time you might comment and make a comparison as to the general student attitude toward education and studying habits, as a comparison between the students that you had on the Voorhis campus and possibly the students you have today.

JFL: On the Voorhis campus, the student body was probably more of a homogeneous group, being all Agriculture [majors], than are the students that we come in contact with at the present time. Most of these students were desirous of obtaining the best information and knowledge that they could in the shortest period of time, in order that they might become employed, in their chosen field of endeavor. At the present time, I find that the students on the Kellogg campus come to the college for a possibly one of three or four reasons. [Inaudible] a number of them come to college to avoid the greetings from Uncle Sam [the draft]. Others come to college because they're too lazy to actually go to work. Others come to keep from getting married, and others to get married. And finally, the group that we are most interested in are those students who come to college with the purpose of obtaining as much knowledge as they can to make them more employable and enable them to hold better jobs. Today, we find that many students are more interested in the salary that they may obtain after graduating from college, but they feel that the college degree is a pass to a high-paying job, which in many instances is not true. It merely enables them to progress faster and progress farther than those who do not attend a college.

JFL: Many of them failed to realize that if taking a job with a large concern—that this concern is not paying them just to give them a job, but their salary represents only a percentage of what they provide for their employer. My recommendations to most students, who are interested in going into various fields of endeavor, is to pick an area in which they are interested. Train themselves in the best way possible, irregardless of the salary. Because in order to be happy and live a good, successful life, you should be working in something that you like to do, rather than just for the salary.

End of interview

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